

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY09 Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grants

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NMFS-HCPO-2009-2001540

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.463, Habitat Conservation.

Dates: Applications must be received, postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 11:59 p.m. EST, November 14, 2008. Use of U.S. mail or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: NOAA Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grants provide funding to catalyze the implementation of locally-driven projects that address priority needs for Atlantic salmon recovery and restoration. Through these grants, NOAA provides funding and technical assistance to support restoration of habitat connectivity and function for the benefit of Atlantic salmon within their current and historical range in New England. Funded projects have strong on-the-ground habitat restoration or protection components that lead to long-term ecological habitat improvements for Atlantic salmon, and also provide educational and social benefits related to Atlantic salmon conservation for citizens and their communities. Proposals selected for funding through this solicitation will be implemented through a cooperative agreement. The Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grants initiative is collaboratively managed by the NOAA Northeast Regional Office and the Office of Habitat Conservation. The NOAA Restoration Center (RC) within the Office of Habitat Conservation will administer the grant competition. Funding of up to \$2,500,000 is expected to be available for Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grants in FY 2009. Typical awards will range from \$50,000 to \$250,000. Although a select few may fall outside of this typical award range, project proposals requesting less than \$30,000 or more than \$500,000 will not be accepted or reviewed.

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

### I. Funding Opportunity Description

#### A. Program Objective

The principal objective of NOAA Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grants is to provide federal financial and technical assistance to locally driven projects that address priority needs for Atlantic salmon recovery and restoration within the species' current and historical range in New England. As restoring properly functioning ecosystems is a priority for reversing this species' decline and achieving recovery, these grants will support on-the-ground projects that restore the habitat connectivity and functions needed for various life stages of Atlantic salmon and other diadromous species ecologically linked to Atlantic salmon.

Successful applications will be those that (1) are able to report a net gain in acres of Atlantic salmon habitat restored or protected, miles of historic Atlantic salmon stream/river habitat made accessible, or improved quality of Atlantic salmon habitat; can confirm that target species will benefit from the completion of the project; have a high likelihood of improving the survival of Atlantic salmon and anticipate long-term beneficial impacts to the Atlantic salmon population; expect other beneficial long-term ecological outcomes; and document education and outreach or volunteer hours involved; and (2) demonstrate collaboration among entities such as public and nonprofit organizations, citizen and watershed groups, industry, corporations and businesses, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, academia, and local government, state, and federal agencies to cooperatively implement Atlantic salmon habitat restoration and protection projects.

Project partners may contribute funding, land, technical assistance, workforce support or other in-kind services; promote grass-roots participation in recovery of Atlantic salmon populations; and engender local stewardship and monitoring activities to sustain and evaluate the performance of the habitat restoration and protection projects. Past locally driven habitat restoration projects supported by NOAA have been successful because they had significant local backing, depended upon citizens' hands-on involvement, and drew community support through strategic outreach and education.

#### B. Program Priorities

Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grant priorities are focused on addressing habitat connectivity and recovery of ecosystem functions for the benefit of Atlantic salmon within the species' current and historic range in New England. Priority will be given to proposals within the Gulf of Maine Distinct Population Segment of

Atlantic Salmon (GOM DPS), from the Androscoggin River northward to the Dennys River, as described in the 2006 Status Review for Anadromous Atlantic salmon (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/statusreviews/atlanticsalmon.pdf>). However, projects which seek to restore or protect potential Atlantic salmon habitat in Maine outside of the range of the GOM DPS, or in three other river systems in New England (Connecticut, Wood-Pawcatuck, and Merrimack Rivers), and which could also improve other diadromous fish species populations that confer benefits to Atlantic salmon, will also be considered. Projects outside Maine and not within the Connecticut, Wood-Pawcatuck, or Merrimack River watersheds are not eligible for funding through this program. The United States Atlantic Salmon Assessment Committee (USASAC) prioritized fish passage needs at its 2007 meeting and pages 74-77 of the 2007 report may provide assistance in identifying projects in rivers outside of Maine (<http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/USASAC>). Additional guidance on priorities for Atlantic salmon in Maine can be found in "Atlantic Salmon in Maine," by the National Research Council.

In all the geographic areas listed above, project types may include but are not limited to: removal of fish passage barriers that limit access to upstream spawning grounds or downstream migration (complete dam removal, notching or breaching of dams, removal of culverts that completely or partially block fish passage and replacement with bridges or fish passable culverts with naturally functioning streambeds, installation of structural fishways); riparian restoration; in-stream restoration to improve stream channel complexity; restoration of proper ecosystem function (water temperature, water flow, sedimentation, erosion, etc.); and restoration of habitat for other diadromous fish communities which confer ecological benefits to Atlantic salmon. Within the GOM DPS, assessment and monitoring activities to address key information gaps and resolve uncertainties associated with project implementation or priorities may also be considered for funding. Although it is not a main priority of this solicitation, funding consideration will be given to land acquisition and easement costs that are directly associated with on-the-ground habitat restoration projects which benefit Atlantic salmon populations.

Priority consideration will be given to those project proposals with the highest potential benefits for recovery and restoration of the species (i.e. anticipate benefits to the population such as an increase in adult returns or increase in distribution of the species); those projects that anticipate an increase in survival of one or more life stages of salmon, especially survival into older life stages; and those proposals that maximize the number of acres of Atlantic salmon habitat restored, stream miles for which salmon access is re-established, or improvements to Atlantic salmon habitat quality. Projects that incorporate proven restoration techniques will be given priority consideration, as will proposals for which the bulk of funding will support on-the-ground implementation activities and maximize the cost-to-benefit ratio.

The grant initiative will emphasize the selection of projects that demonstrate a coordinated effort to maximize quality Atlantic salmon habitat within a watershed. Proposals that show consideration of other restoration projects, in order to restore a

greater portion of a watershed, will receive priority consideration. Projects taking place in special management areas, such as areas within Essential Fish Habitat identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, may receive greater funding consideration.

Additionally, projects should feature pre- and post- project monitoring components to receive priority consideration. To ensure a basic level of assessment of project success, on-the-ground restoration projects should have clearly identified goals (broad in scope) and specific, measurable objectives. Proposals should describe evaluation of these objectives by indicating the structural and functional parameters that will be monitored during the award period, and for an appropriate duration after project completion. Proposals should describe how monitoring will be conducted in a timely fashion by describing the frequency and length of time appropriate to each parameter in the context of the project objectives and status. An overview of project monitoring is available on the Restoration Center's webpage ([http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects\\_programs/crp/partners\\_funding/Monitoring%20Program%208\\_10\\_05.pdf](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/partners_funding/Monitoring%20Program%208_10_05.pdf)) and examples of structural and functional monitoring parameters by habitat restoration project type are available on the online NOAA Restoration Monitoring Planner ([www.habitat.noaa.gov/restoration/rmp](http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/restoration/rmp)). Assistance in refining the objectives and/or selecting appropriate parameters is available from NOAA staff. Projects that propose to do more in-depth monitoring in conjunction with an on-the-ground restoration project may apply for a longer award period (up to 36 months).

While the focus of this solicitation is to provide funding and technical expertise to support on-the-ground implementation of habitat restoration and protection projects that involve community support, NOAA recognizes that accomplishing this work is a multi-faceted effort involving project design, engineering services, permitting, construction, oversight, monitoring, and education and outreach. Applicants may therefore apply for funding to support a combination of these activities; however, priority will be given to proposals that support on-the-ground implementation activities. If the project is still in the feasibility and design phase, applications should provide enough information about the project so reviewers can gauge the project's likelihood of success. Projects that involve an outreach and/or volunteer component tied to the restoration activities will receive greater consideration.

Proposals emphasizing a singular restoration component, such as only outreach or program coordination are discouraged, as are applications that propose to expand an organization's day-to-day activities, or that primarily seek support for administration, salaries, overhead, and travel. Because funds are limited, large equipment purchases such as vehicles, boats and similar items will be a low priority.

NOAA will consider funding more than one project under a single award, however all projects should be sufficiently developed as per the guidelines and information requirements listed in this document for an application to be competitive, and all projects should be able to be completed within the award period recommended below.

### C. Program Authority

The Secretary of Commerce is authorized under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 661, as amended by the Reorganization Plan No. 4 of 1970, to provide grants or cooperative agreements for fisheries habitat restoration. The Secretary of Commerce is also authorized under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006 (H.R. 5946) to provide funding and technical expertise for fisheries and coastal habitat restoration and to promote significant community support and volunteer participation in such activities.

## II. Award Information

### A. Funding Availability

This solicitation announces that funding of up to \$2,500,000 is expected to be available for the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grants in FY 2009. Actual funding availability for this solicitation is contingent upon Fiscal Year 2009 Congressional appropriations. NOAA anticipates that typical project awards will range from \$50,000 to \$250,000; proposals requesting less than \$30,000 or more than \$500,000 will not be accepted under this solicitation.

NOAA anticipates that between 25 and 40 awards will be made as a result of this solicitation. The exact amount of funds that may be awarded will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and NOAA representatives. Publication of this document does not obligate NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any parts of any available funds.

### B. Project/Award Period

Applicants should plan their projects so that the restoration and monitoring activities proposed for this funding will be completed within 24 months of the start date of the award. Projects that propose to do more in-depth monitoring in conjunction with an on-the-ground restoration project may apply for a longer award period (up to 36 months). The earliest anticipated start date for project awards will be June 1, 2009; applicants should consider this date when developing plans for initiating proposed activities. If an application is selected for funding, NOAA has no

obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Any subsequent proposal to continue work on an existing project must be submitted to a competitive process for consideration and will not receive preferential treatment. Permission to extend the period of performance beyond the original award period is at the discretion of NOAA and must be requested through NOAA Grants Online at least 60 days in advance of an award's expiration date.

### C. Type of Funding Instrument

Selected applications will be funded through a cooperative agreement since NOAA staff will be substantially involved in aspects of the project. Substantial involvement may include, but is not limited to: activities such as hands-on technical or permitting assistance, support in development of appropriate monitoring protocols to ensure a basic level of assessment of project success, tracking the progression of the project through site visits and progress report evaluation, and involvement in public meetings and events to highlight restoration activities.

## III. Eligibility Information

### A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, other non-profits, industry and commercial (for profit) organizations, organizations under the jurisdiction of foreign governments, international organizations, and state, local and Indian tribal governments whose projects have the potential to benefit NOAA trust resources. Applications from federal agencies or employees of federal agencies will not be considered. Federal agencies are strongly encouraged to work with states, non-governmental organizations, national service clubs or youth corps organizations and others that are eligible to apply.

The Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA) is strongly committed to broadening the participation of historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges and universities, and institutions that work in under-served areas. NOAA encourages proposals from or involving any of the above institutions.

### B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

A major goal of this grant solicitation will be to provide seed money for

projects that leverage funds and other contributions from a broad public and private sector to implement locally important habitat restoration projects to benefit Atlantic salmon populations. To this end, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate a 1:1 non-federal match for NOAA funds requested to conduct the proposed project. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to leverage as much investment as possible, but applicants with little or no match will not be disqualified. Applicants should note that cost sharing is an element considered in Evaluation Criterion #4 "Project Costs" (Section V.A.4.); however matters related to the importance and scientific merits of the proposed project comprise the majority of the evaluation criteria.

Match to NOAA funds can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services and volunteer labor. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from non-federal partners, as long as such contributions are not being used to match any other funds and are available within the project period stated in the application. Federal sources cannot be considered for matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage. Applicants are also permitted to apply federally negotiated indirect costs in excess of federal share limits as described in Section IV. E. "Funding Restrictions."

Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Successful applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions, including the overall number of volunteers and in-kind participation hours devoted to individual restoration projects. Letters of commitment for any secured resources that will be used as match for an award under this solicitation should be submitted as an attachment to the application, see Section IV.B.

### C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

The following project proposals will not be considered eligible under this solicitation and will be disqualified:

- Project proposals requesting less than \$30,000 or greater than \$500,000
- Projects outside Maine and outside the Connecticut, Wood-Pawcatuck, and Merrimack River watersheds
- Project proposals to carry out feasibility studies, removal, or partial removal of dams currently licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).
- Project proposals that include funding requests for the following activities: (1) activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by local, state or federal law; (2) activities that constitute restoration for natural resource damages required under federal, state or local law; and (3) activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation.

## IV. Application and Submission Information

### A. Address to Request Application Package

Complete application packages, including required federal forms, general instructions, and supplementary instructions can be found on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). If the application forms and instructions cannot be downloaded from [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)., please contact Cathy Bozek (Cathy.Bozek@noaa.gov) or Craig Woolcott (Craig.Woolcott@noaa.gov) at 301-713-0174.

### B. Content and Form of Application

Applicants are encouraged to apply through the [grants.gov](http://grants.gov) website ([www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)), the clearinghouse for federal financial assistance. A complete standard NOAA grant application package should be submitted in accordance with the guidelines in this document. Each application should include:

- o required federal application forms, including:
  - Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424 (7/03 version or newer)
  - Budget Information, Non-construction Programs: SF-424A
  - Assurances, Non-construction Programs: SF-424B
  - Certification Regarding Lobbying: CD-511
  - CD-512 (remains with applicant-do not submit as part of the application package)
- o depending on the applicant, the following forms may also be required:
  - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: SF-LLL (if applicable)
  - Applicant for Federal Assistance: CD-346 (required for the following individuals: Non-profit Organizations, Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships, Corporations and Joint Venture)
- o a project summary (described below, limit 2 pages)
- o a project narrative (described below, limit 10 pages)
- o a detailed, narrative budget justification (described below, limit 4 pages)
- o the curriculum vitae or resume of primary project personnel
- o a site location map such as a USGS topographic quadrangle map with site location(s) highlighted
- o letters of commitment for any secured non-federal match resources, if applicable
- o a letter documenting private landowner or public land manager support
- o other relevant attachments the applicant deems important to the overall understanding and evaluation of the proposed project, such as summaries of regional restoration plans, project site photographs, or design plans (limit 20 pages)

Applications submitted through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) should include only three files in addition to the federal application forms: 1) the project summary and narrative, 2) the budget justification, and 3) all other attachments combined into one file, including resumes, maps, and support letters. PDF files are the preferred format; information



about converting documents to PDF files is available on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) under Download Software in the Help tab.

If [grants.gov](http://grants.gov) cannot reasonably be used, a hard copy application, with the SF424 Form bearing an original, ink signature (blue ink preferred) may be submitted to the NOAA Restoration Center (see section IV. C. Submission Dates and Times and Section IV. F. Other Submission Requirements for complete mailing instructions). No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Paper applications should be printed on one side only, on 8.5" x 11" paper, and should not be bound in any manner. Applications submitted via hard copy should also include an electronic copy of the full application on a compact disc (CD).

#### 1. Project Summary (2 pages):

- Applicant Organization
- Project Title
- Site Location - nearest town or watershed, and geographic coordinates if known
- Landowner, and owner of barrier if applicable - name and address if privately owned, resource agency contact if public land
- On-the-Ground Implementation Start Date - if different than award start date
- NOAA Trust Resources to benefit from the project - whether Atlantic salmon are currently using the project area, other species currently using the project area or expected to return, and any listed threatened or endangered species in the project area or in the vicinity
- Project Scope - Briefly list specific tasks to be accomplished with requested funds, and proposed techniques that will be used to implement and monitor the restoration project.
- Project Outputs/Outcomes - Number of acres to be restored or stream miles to be made accessible to Atlantic salmon and other diadromous fish, anticipated impact on survival of Atlantic salmon, anticipated ecological outcomes that may be confirmed by pre and post-implementation monitoring.
- Project Time Line
- Permits - identify permits expected to be necessary for this project and current status of applications or consultations
- Federal Funds Requested & Non-Federal Match Anticipated
- Overall Project Cost
- Partner and Volunteer Support Anticipated - include hours/tasks
- Letters of Support - list those included with the application, particularly those from private landowner/public lands agency resource personnel

#### 2. Project Narrative (10 pages)

The project narrative should closely follow the organization of the evaluation criteria (see Section V.A. Evaluation Criteria) for the application to receive a consistent review against competing applications. The body of the narrative description should be no more than 10 pages long (in 12-point font with 1" margins) and should give a

clear presentation of the proposed work. In general, proposals should clearly demonstrate anticipated benefits to specific rivers and streams currently or historically used by Atlantic salmon. Describe how these benefits will be achieved through the proposed restoration activities, how these habitat improvements will benefit Atlantic salmon populations, and how activities are likely to increase survival of Atlantic salmon.

The narrative should include at least one of the following: an estimate of acreage to be restored by the proposed project or stream miles to be reopened to fish passage, proportion of local degraded habitat to be restored, estimated improvement in habitat quality, anticipated impact on survival of one or more life stages of Atlantic salmon, or another measure that describes the significance of the proposed actions on Atlantic salmon habitat and populations.

The narrative should describe the historic condition of the restoration site and, if applicable, the processes which resulted in degradation of the area and how these processes have been abated to allow for successful restoration. It should list the species currently found in the project site, identify the problems the project will address, describe short- and long-term objectives and goals, detail the methods for carrying out and monitoring the project, and clearly explain the project's relevance and significance to enhancing habitat to benefit Atlantic salmon populations. It should also describe how the preferred alternative for restoration was determined by the stakeholders. The applicant should indicate whether the proposed project is part of a larger community or watershed plan, or otherwise prioritized in a publicly-vetted, published restoration or planning document.

The narrative should include detailed information about the proposed project, including:

- historic fish presence and potential for return of or benefits to Atlantic salmon and other diadromous species populations in the area;
- how Atlantic salmon survival is expected to be improved;
- projects that are primarily focused on restoring other diadromous species should describe how this work will benefit Atlantic salmon populations;
- dam removal and fish passage projects should describe historical fish runs in the river, the river length that will be restored, the distance to the next upstream blockage, the quality of upstream Atlantic salmon habitat, and any downstream blockages or seasonal impediments to fish passage; state how the project will meet fish passage guidelines established for the area; describe barrier and impoundment dimensions (in acre feet), the original purpose and age of the barrier, and the amount and characterization of sediments behind the barrier; and identify the dam owner/landowner;
- other project types should describe the area (in acres) that will be restored or protected, and how the habitat quality will be improved;
- projects involving dam removals, installation of structural fishways, large woody debris placement, or other engineering decision making should highlight the qualifications and experience of the designer/engineer, outline the specific objectives for the work, and indicate the monitoring and adaptive management plans for the project;

- projects involving planting should include information on site preparation, the basis for determining species and planting density, a brief discussion about genetic integrity and how that will be addressed, and detail planned maintenance activities including duration of maintenance;
- projects involving stocking of fish in coordination with an on-the-ground habitat restoration project should include information on the source population, remnant local populations, stocking life stage and densities, duration, monitoring, and evaluation;
- potential changes to hydrology and flooding regimes;
- potential sources of sediment contamination within the watershed;
- projects involving assessment and monitoring associated with on-the-ground restoration should identify the information gap or uncertainty being addressed, the goals of the assessment, and the methodology;
- the process used to ensure that the project is being put forward by common agreement;
- safety considerations;
- the likelihood of historic and cultural resources in the area;
- anticipated economic or community benefits associated with the project.

To ensure a basic level of assessment of project success, implementation of on-the-ground habitat restoration projects must have clearly identified goals (broad in scope) and specific, measurable objectives. Proposals should describe evaluation of these objectives by indicating at least one structural and one functional parameter that will be monitored during the project period. For each selected parameter (minimum of two), a baseline value, reference value, and a proposed target value must be identified prior to the implementation of restoration efforts. Proposals should describe how monitoring will be conducted in a timely fashion by describing the frequency and length of time appropriate to each parameter in the context of the project objectives and status. See Section I B for more information on monitoring priorities.

Parameters that may be measured include spatial extent of habitat use by Atlantic salmon and other diadromous species upstream of or at the project site; changes in habitat quality and stream channel geometry; and changes in Atlantic salmon abundance (e.g. trend in out-migrating juveniles) and survival. Monitoring must be conducted in a timely fashion with a frequency and length of time appropriate for each parameter. Assistance in refining the objectives and/or selecting appropriate parameters is available from NOAA Restoration Center staff working with the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grants.

To demonstrate project readiness, and to indicate a project's potential to realize long-term benefits for NOAA trust resources and to protect the federal investment, a letter of commitment from the landowner should be provided for projects on private land, or from relevant resource agency personnel for projects on public, permanently protected land. This letter should provide assurance that the project will be maintained for its intended purpose. Documentation of plans for long-term project management should also be included.

To provide assurance that the project will expeditiously meet environmental

compliance and permitting requirements, so that on-the-ground activities will begin within the first 12 months after the project's start date, projects that would require permits and consultations should list all necessary permits required to complete the project, including the appropriate contact information for each permitting agency and documentation of all permits already secured for the project.

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicants that are seeking NOAA federal funding. Proposals should provide enough detail for NOAA to make a NEPA determination (see Section VI. B. "Administrative and National Policy Requirements"). Successful applications cannot be forwarded to the NOAA Grants Management Division with recommendations for funding until NOAA completes necessary NEPA documentation. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under the description of proposed activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, such as site locations, species and habitat(s) to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use of and/or disposal of hazardous or toxic substances, introduction of non-indigenous species, etc.).

For projects located within the range of listed Atlantic salmon, shortnose sturgeon, or other listed species, NOAA must analyze the potential effects of projects on listed species and their habitat. Consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act may be required for some projects. Project applicants should identify whether listed species are within the project area, how they may be affected by project activities, and identify steps that will be taken to minimize the potential for impacts to listed species and their habitats. If impacts to listed species are anticipated, the type and extent of impacts should be described in the application.

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment if NOAA determines an assessment is required and one does not already exist for the activities proposed in the application. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an award.

Applicants are encouraged to consult with NOAA as early as possible to obtain guidance with respect to the level and scope of information needed by NOAA to comply with NEPA. A phased approach to funding project activities may be recommended or special award conditions may be imposed limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements to fulfill. The type of detailed information described above is critical to evaluating the significance of a project and its readiness to use available funding.

The project narrative should describe the organizational structure of the applicant

group, identify proposed project staff, and detail their experience and qualifications in implementing habitat restoration projects and managing grants. If known, the applicant should state the level of NOAA involvement in, and/or support for the project and include contact information of relevant NOAA staff.

The project narrative should also describe community involvement in the project, such as the contributions of community partners, volunteer opportunities, citizen participation, education/outreach/stewardship plans, and efforts to disseminate information on project goals and results and/or the sources of project funding and support. If applicable, the narrative should explain how the proposed project will complement or encourage other local restoration or conservation activities. In addition, the project narrative should also describe the anticipated economic, community, or socio-economic benefits associated with the proposed project.

### 3. Budget Justification (4 pages)

The narrative budget justification must include a detailed breakdown by category of cost (object class) separated into federal and non-federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the project, with appropriate narrative justification for both the federal and non-federal shares. The object classes should match those found on Form 424A. Applicants are encouraged to include a budget table to further clarify the cost breakdown. Applications will be evaluated for cost-effectiveness by examining the proportion of funds directed to on-the-ground implementation compared with that to be used for general program support.

If funding will be used to complete part of a larger project, a budget for the entire project should be provided to allow the selecting official to make an informed determination of a project's readiness and cost-benefit ratio. A narrative budget justification should indicate if the project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere, what amount has been requested or secured from other sources, and whether the funds requested/secured are federal or non-federal. The source of any non-federal matching funds or in-kind contributions should be detailed.

The NOAA Grants Management Division will review budget information for recommended applications to determine if costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and realistic. The NOAA Grants Management Division has a Budget Guidelines document available at: <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/appkit.shtml>.

### 4. Other Application Submission Information

Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NOAA as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Inclusion of supplementary materials such as photographs, project designs, diagrams, copies of secured permits, letters of support, etc. are strongly encouraged. Letters from partners, local and state governments, and Congressional representatives are helpful in demonstrating support for the project. Such supplementary information should be combined and submitted

as one single electronic file.

### C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be submitted to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), or postmarked, or provided to a delivery service by 11:59 p.m. EST, November 14, 2008. Use of U.S. Postal Service or another delivery service must be documented with a receipt. Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after that date and time will not be considered for funding. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, applications received later than 15 business days following the postmark closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. .

### D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this initiative are subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) established as a result of EO 12372. To find out about and comply with a State's process under EO 12372, the names, addresses and phone numbers of participating SPOC's are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>.

### E. Funding Restrictions

Pre-award costs are generally unallowable. A pre-award cost incurred before a notice of award document is provided by the NOAA Grants Office is at the applicant's own risk. The earliest date for receipt of awards will be June 1, 2009. Applicants should consider this selection and processing time in developing requested start dates for proposed project activities.

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. For this solicitation, the federal share of the indirect costs must not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use

of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the federal direct costs, the difference may be counted as part of the non-federal share.

A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the federal government should be included with the application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

#### F. Other Submission Requirements

Applications must be submitted through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Applicants should note that it takes approximately 3 weeks to register with [grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), and registration is required only once. Applicants should consider the time needed to register with [grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), and should begin the registration process well in advance of the application due date if they have never registered with [grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

If the applicant does not have Internet access, a hard copy application with the SF424 bearing an original, ink signature (blue ink preferred) must be postmarked, or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt, by 11:59 p.m., November 14, 2008, and sent to: NOAA Restoration Center (F/HC3), Office of Habitat Conservation, NOAA Fisheries, 1315 East West Highway, Rm. 14727, Silver Spring, MD 20910. ATTN: Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grant Applications. Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after that date will not be considered for funding. Applications submitted via the U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, applications received later than 15 business days following the postmark closing date will not be accepted. No facsimile or electronic mail applications will be accepted. Paper applications should be printed on one side only, on 8.5" x 11" paper, and should not be bound in any manner. Applicants submitting paper applications should also include a full copy of the application on a compact disc (CD).

Applications must be submitted through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), unless an applicant does not have Internet access. In that case, hard copies with original signatures may be sent to:

NOAA Restoration Center (F/HC3), Office of Habitat Conservation, NOAA Fisheries, 1315 East West Highway, Rm. 14727, Silver Spring, MD 20910. ATTN: Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grant Applications

#### V. Application Review Information

## A. Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the following five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and respective weights specified below. Applications that address the issues contained in these criteria are likely to be more competitive.

### 1. Importance and Applicability of Proposal (35 points)

This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state or local activities. For the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

- The potential of the project to restore, protect, conserve or enhance habitat for Atlantic salmon, resulting in direct ecological benefits or otherwise maximizing benefits for the recovery of the Gulf of Maine DPS population or restoration of this species within its viable, historic range (10 points)
- The potential of the project to increase survival of one or more life stages of Atlantic salmon, especially increasing survival of salmon into older life stages (8 points)
- Whether the project, when considered in the context of the local environment, will restore or protect high quality habitat for Atlantic salmon; or enhance habitat in special management areas such as state or federal protected areas or areas identified by NOAA Fisheries as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (6 points)
- The amount (e.g. stream miles, acres) of habitat to be protected, restored, or made accessible for Atlantic salmon or other diadromous species ecologically linked to Atlantic salmon (6 points)
- Whether the project is a regional/local priority as evidenced by reference to a specified restoration plan, watershed assessment, recovery plan, or other publicly vetted, priority setting planning document (5 points)

### 2. Technical/Scientific Merit (30 points)

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grants competition, proposals will be evaluated based on the following:

- The completeness and adequacy of detail in the project description, including clearly stated objectives and goals, and the extent to which the implementation plan is achievable within the 24 month award period, including the ability to yield minimum monitoring data (5 points)



- The overall technical feasibility of the project from both biological and engineering perspectives, including whether the proposed approach is technically sound and uses appropriate methods that are likely to achieve project goals and objectives (5 points)
- Whether the applicant has chosen the most self-sustaining restoration technique that accomplishes the project's goals. For projects requiring long-term management to assure success/proper function, there should be an adequate long-term operation and/or maintenance plan (5 points)
- Whether there is an effective mechanism to evaluate project success that includes a clearly stated goal and at least one structural and one functional monitoring parameter (5 points)
- Whether there is assurance that the project will expeditiously meet environmental compliance and permitting requirements, so that on-the-ground activities will begin within the first 12 months after the project's start date (5 points)
- Whether there is a letter of commitment from the affected barrier owner/landowner (5 points)

### 3. Overall Qualifications of Applicants (10 points)

This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, demonstrated commitment, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grants competition, NOAA will evaluate applications based on the following:

- The capacity of the applicant and associated project personnel to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work or to access necessary technical expertise, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing and effectively managing and overseeing projects that benefit living marine or coastal resources. Examples of projects similar in scope and nature that have been successfully completed by the implementation team are encouraged, as are resumes or other documentation of professional capacities. (5 points)
- The facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities available to the applicant to support and successfully manage the proposed work, guide the project to successful completion, and adequately report project results and outcomes; past grant administration experience (5 points)

### 4. Project Costs (15 points)

This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grants competition, proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- Cost-effectiveness. Reviewers will examine the percentage of funds that will be

dedicated to all phases of project implementation including on-the-ground restoration activities, compared to the percentage for general program support such as administration, salaries, overhead and travel. Applications proposing to use funds to expand an organization's day-to-day activities are unlikely to obtain a high score under this criterion. To encourage the restoration or protection project, funding for salaries must be used to support staff directly involved in accomplishing the work and should contain a detailed breakdown of personnel hours and costs by task (4 points)

- Whether the proposed budget is realistic, based on the applicant's stated objectives and time frame, and sufficiently detailed, with appropriate budget breakdown and justification of both federal and non-federal shares by object class as listed on form SF-424A. Requests for equipment (any single piece of equipment costing \$5,000 or more) should be strongly tied to achieving on-the-ground restoration and a comparison with rental costs should be used to justify the need to purchase. In general, funding requests for equipment purchases such as vehicles, heavy equipment and similar items will be a low priority (4 points)

- The ability of the applicant to demonstrate that a significant benefit will be generated for a reasonable cost. If funds are requested for partial support of a project, the budget will be examined with respect to the overall project budget to allow an informed determination of a project's readiness and cost-benefit ratio (4 points)

- The overall leverage of NOAA funds anticipated, including any non-federal match or other federal funding anticipated or awarded. NOAA encourages non-federal cost-sharing at a 1:1 level to leverage funding or other resources that improve cost-effectiveness and to further encourage partnerships. Applicants who provide documentation that acceptable secured match, particularly cash match, is available within the proposed project period are likely to score higher on this criterion (3 points)

#### 5. Outreach, Education and Community Involvement (10 points)

NOAA assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission. For the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Grants competition, proposals will be evaluated on the following:

- The potential of the project to foster long-term stewardship and generate a community conservation ethic through citizen involvement, such as hands-on participation in restoration activities undertaken by volunteers or work crews (4 points)

- The extent to which the project involves public outreach, and seeks to disseminate information on project goals, results, project partners and the sources of funding and other support provided, or otherwise compliments or encourages future restoration or protection projects and activities to benefit Atlantic salmon populations (3 points)

- The degree to which the project has significant community support as demonstrated by a diversity of partners and/or sponsorship (letters of support, confirmed contributions) from local entities, state and local governments, or members of

## Congress (3 points)

### B. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be screened by NOAA staff to determine if they are eligible and complete. Eligible proposals will undergo a technical review, ranking, and selection process. As appropriate during this process, the NOAA Restoration Center and the NOAA Northeast Regional Office will solicit individual technical evaluations of each project proposed and may request evaluations from other NOAA offices, the Regional Fishery Management Councils, other federal and state agencies, such as state coastal management agencies and state fish and wildlife agencies, and private and public sector Atlantic salmon habitat experts who have knowledge of a specific applicant or project. Proposals will also be reviewed by NOAA regional and headquarters staff to determine how well they meet the stated aims of the grant solicitation, and how well the proposal meets the goals of the NOAA Northeast Regional Office and the NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation.

Applications for Atlantic salmon habitat restoration will be evaluated by at least three individual technical reviewers, including those mentioned above, according to the criteria and weights described in this solicitation (see Section V.A. Evaluation Criteria). Reviewer comments, average reviewer scores, and a rank order will be presented to the Director of the Restoration Center (Director). The Director, in collaboration with the Regional Administrator for the Northeast Region, will select the proposals to be recommended to the Grants Management Division (GMD) for funding and determine the amount of funds available for each approved proposal.

### C. Selection Factors

The project proposals shall be recommended in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

- (1) the availability of funding
- (2) the balance/distribution of funds: a) geographically, b) by type of institutions, c) by type of partners, d) by research areas, e) by project types
- (3) duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA and/or other federal agencies
- (4) initiative priorities and policy factors as set out in section I.A and B
- (5) the applicant's prior award performance

- (6) partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups
- (7) adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before funding recommendations are acted upon by GMD

Hence, awards may not necessarily be made to the highest scoring proposals. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not among those recommended for funding. Unsuccessful applications submitted in hard copy will be kept on file until the close of the following fiscal year then destroyed.

#### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Successful applicants generally will be identified approximately 90-120 days after the close of this solicitation. Typically, the earliest start date for projects will be June 1, 2009, dependant on the completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations, NEPA analysis, and documentation supporting cooperative agreement activities. Applicants should consider this timeline in developing requested start dates for proposed projects.

### VI. Award Administration Information

#### A. Award Notices

Successful applicants may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of an award. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and specific NOAA cooperative involvement with the activities of each project will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, the NOAA Grants Office, and Restoration Center staff. Projects should not be initiated in expectation of federal funding until a notice of award document is received electronically from the NOAA Grants Office in Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management system.

#### B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

##### 1. Administrative Requirements

Successful applicants that accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be

bound by Department of Commerce standard terms and conditions. This document will be provided in the award package in Grants Online, NOAA's online grants management system. It can also be found at: <http://www.ago.noaa.gov/grants/>

In addition, award documents provided by the NOAA Grants Office in the Grants Online award package may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements to fulfill, and/or stating other compliance requirements for the award as applicable.

## 2. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Requirements

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, [http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216\\_6\\_TOC.pdf](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/NAO216_6_TOC.pdf), and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, [http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc\\_ceq.htm](http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm). Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., disposal of hazardous or toxic substances such as those that might be contained in sediment behind impoundments, the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species that might also gain access to upper watershed habitats as a result of the project, impacts to endangered and threatened species, etc.). In order to obtain adequate information about the proposed project, NOAA may ask applicants to complete portions of the "Environmental Compliance Questionnaire for NOAA Federal Financial Assistance Applicants" (OMB Approval no: 0648-0538, expires 6/30/09).

For projects located within the range of listed Atlantic salmon, shortnose sturgeon or other listed species, NOAA must analyze the potential effects of projects on listed species and their habitat. Consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act may be required for some projects. Project applicants should identify whether listed species are within the project area, how they may be affected by project activities, and identify steps that will be taken to minimize the potential for impacts to listed species and their habitats. If impacts to listed species are anticipated, the type and extent of impacts should be described in the application.

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the

denial of an application.

Applicants proposing habitat restoration activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the NOAA Fisheries Community-based Restoration Program Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or Supplemental PEA and FONSI will be informed after the peer review stage and may be requested to assist in the preparation of an EA prior to an award being made, or provide for NOAA review a copy of an EA that covers proposed activities if one exists. The CRP PEA and FONSI can be found at:

[http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects\\_programs/crp/index.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/index.html)

It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, state and local government permits and approvals where necessary for the proposed work to be conducted. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize the potential for adverse impacts to the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of required environmental permits should be included in the application package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they contain sufficient information to allow NOAA staff to conduct a NEPA analysis so that appropriate NEPA documentation, required as part of the application package, can be submitted to the NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) along with the recommendation for funding for selected applications.

### C. Reporting

Progress reports are due semi-annually and cover 6-month periods that begin with the start date listed in award documentation. Progress reports are to be submitted to the Federal Program Officer via the Grants Online system and are due no later than 30 days after each 6-month project period. A final report is due no later than 90 days after the expiration date of an award.

Progress reports may be required to be submitted using a specific format for narrative information and a fill-form for project specific details that can be found on the NOAA Restoration Center website at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>. Use of this progress report form and format involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, and has been approved by OMB under control number 0648-0472. This form should be filled out and attached in the appropriate Grants Online award file by the designated reporting deadlines. Complete details on reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants in the award documentation provided by the NOAA Grants Management Division in the Grants Online award package.

Financial reports cover the periods from October 1 - March 31 (due by April 30) and April 1 - September 30 (due by October 30), and should be submitted to the

NOAA Grants Management Division via the Grants Online system.

## VII. Agency Contacts

For further information contact Cathy Bozek (Cathy.Bozek@noaa.gov) or Craig Woolcott (Craig.Woolcott@noaa.gov) at (301) 713-0174. Potential applicants are invited to contact NOAA staff before submitting an application to discuss the applicability of project ideas to the goals and objectives of the grant solicitation.

## VIII. Other Information

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696) are applicable to this solicitation.

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if initiatives fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

Prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act [5 U.S.C. 553 (a) (2)] or by any other law for this document concerning grants, benefits, and contracts. Accordingly, a regulatory flexibility analysis is not required by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S. C. 601 et seq.).

This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

The use of the standard NOAA grant application package referred to in this notice involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act. The use of Standard Forms 424, 424A, 424B, SF-LLL, and CD-346 have been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046, and 0605-0001.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.

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